

The Baptist Record

JOURNAL OF THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION

Thursday, December 22, 1988

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Armenian tragedy brings unity among world people

By Art Toalston

RICHMOND, Va. (BP) — Soviet Baptists have found a niche in post-earthquake relief work by aiding 2,000 injured Armenian children who have been flown to Moscow.

The Soviet government requested visitation and care for the children in hospitals and other locations in Moscow, reported Keith Parker, director of Southern Baptist work in Europe.

Meanwhile, the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, has set aside \$30,000 in disaster relief funds for medical, clothing and housing needs stemming from the Dec. 7 earthquake in Soviet Armenia. As many as 60,000 people died and half a million were left homeless by the earthquake, according to estimates. Foreign Mission Board officials expect to make additional allocations for Armenian relief from hunger relief funds.

Soviet Baptists also have asked the Foreign Mission Board and Baptist World Alliance to send 10,000 Armenian-language Bibles for distribution among the survivors.

Two Soviet Baptists dispatched to Armenia have reported the destruction of two of the three Baptist churches in the earthquake-stricken region, Parker said. No Baptists were reported killed, but nearly all lost

relatives in the disaster. One church had about 80 members, while the other two had about 40 members each.

The request for Soviet Baptist help with injured Armenian children resulted from the Soviet government's earlier positive experience with 80 Baptist female volunteers who are cooking in a mental hospital in Moscow, Parker said. Since April, the women have befriended patients at the hospital and helped with cleaning and other jobs there.

In the past, the government has not allowed churches to engage in social ministry, but that stance has changed with the "glasnost" reforms initiated by Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev.

Parker said news of the opportunity for Soviet Baptists to aid Armenian children was reported by Alexei Bichkov, general secretary of the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists in the Soviet Union, and relayed by Knud Wumpelmann, general secretary of the European Baptist Federation.

Two Baptist volunteer teams have started the children's ministry, and more teams are being organized, Parker said.

Baptist churches throughout the Ukraine, and in other Soviet regions

scheduled special Armenian relief offerings Dec. 18, reported John Merritt in a telephone call from Leningrad. Merritt, executive director of the English-language European Baptist Convention, was in the midst of a Dec. 5-15 trip to the Soviet Union.

No Soviet Baptist volunteer work crews have yet been granted entry to Armenia. For now, government officials say, only trauma specialists and persons skilled in sorting through disaster debris are needed.

Nor have Southern Baptist volunteers been dispatched to the scene, although numerous phone calls offering help have been received at the Foreign Mission Board. The U.S. Agency for International Development's disaster assistance office in Washington, is processing appropriate specialists to be sent to the Soviet Union, said John Cheyne, Foreign Mission Board human needs director.

Southern Baptists could channel funds for Armenian relief through the Foreign Mission Board, P.O. Box 6767, Richmond, Va. 23230, Cheyne said.

With relief efforts taking on a worldwide dimension, Soviet Baptist leader Bichkov commented, "Our people watch with tears in their eyes how this tragedy has brought unity among all people in the world."

Art Toalston writes for the FMB.

"Unto you is born . . . a Savior"

NASHVILLE — The birth of the Savior is the central focus for Christians around the world during the Christmas season. Photo by Jim Veneman.

"His name is Jesus"

This Child for one purpose is sent,
to die so mankind might go free,
for only in this Child born of Mary,
is redemption for you and for me.

Let his Spirit come rest upon us,
as we give, let it be with his love,
may we pause to find moments of quietness,
and give thanks to the Father above.

For never an event in history,
never one person on earth,
from the eons of time beginning,
has made impact as this Holy Birth.

The Son of God is this Child,
His birth long before prophesied,
He is sent by your Father in heaven,
and for you he will suffer and die.

Then, why I must come to ask you,
on this day of all days at its end,
must we look back through the glitter,
find forgotten, our Savior and Friend?

Let the world come today and rejoice,
let our banners begin to unfurl,
for the Child in this lowly crib,
has, today, come to conquer the world.

Unto us a Child has been given,
on his shoulders all suffering will cease,
His Name is Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God,
He is Jesus, the Sweet Prince of Peace.

—Mary Pittman James
Petal

SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL
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Cloverdale pays for chapel in Brazil

Cloverdale Church of Natchez has dispatched \$5,000 to the Foreign Mission Board to be used to build a chapel in Piracuruca, Piaui, Brazil, according to Ray Walters, pastor.

During a world missions conference, members of the church heard Mrs. Victor Johnson tell of a need for a chapel in the town and provide the information that \$5,000 would build it.

The members voted to send \$5,000 to the Foreign Mission Board for that purpose.

Cloverdale Church has only about 55 in Sunday School, the pastor reports. In addition to the money for the chapel in Piracuruca, the church adopted a Lottie Moon Christmas Offering goal of \$2,500.



"Celebrating our 100th"

"Celebrating our 100th" was the theme of the float which First Church, Laurel, 100 years old, entered in the Laurel Christmas parade on Dec. 3. An old-fashioned preacher was speaking to an old-fashioned congregation before a little cabin church at the end, and a group of modern-day carolers were singing

before a modern-day church on the other end of the float. Above, crowds wave as the float passes the church. (See story on Page 5, about First, Laurel's year-long centennial celebration.)

Editorials . . . by Don McGregor

'Tis the season to be jolly?

'Tis the season to be wracking our brains trying to figure out what to give people we really don't want to give anything to and who don't need what we give them, but it's Christmas, and we're expected to do it.

That's the actual, pervasive, Christian spirit.

This aspect of Christmas demands a great deal of our time, and we're always glad when it's over and things get back to normal. But, surely, we can find a bit of time to reflect on the reason we celebrate Christmas, why the whole world celebrates Christmas, really.

We become ensnared in church-state problems as we try to determine whether or not to have a lighted cross on a public building or a manger scene in the public schoolhouse, but

those Christian symbols suggest the only reason for observing Christmas. It seems that we should either not observe Christmas at all from a public standpoint or go ahead with the cross on the building and the manger scene in the schoolhouse. To determine that we can have a Santa Claus display but not a manger scene is all right, but it shouldn't be called Christmas.

Christmas has become the world's greatest holiday. It is the single biggest money making operation of the year for much of the commercial establishment.

The birth of Christ, however, has nothing to do with it.

Suppose there were 100 million Christians in the United States and each one were to go ahead with gifts

to family and close friends but cut out the frivolous things that cause the hassle. Suppose each of the 100 million were to cut his Christmas spending by \$100. That would be a \$10 billion blow to the nation's economy. That would attract attention. It also would be disastrous.

Christmas, however, affords a prime opportunity for a Christian witness. Somehow, could we not use the season to make more of an impact on the public as to why they are having a holiday and enjoying time with family and friends?

At any rate, the Baptist Record takes this opportunity to wish for all of its readers a very happy and meaningful Christmas and a bright new year filled with optimism and accomplishments.

Merry Christmas to all

Renee Walley Evelyn Keyes

Florence Ann Larrimore Tim Nicholas

Anne W. McWilliams

Don W. McGregor

Betty Anne Bailey

Don't blame Mrs. O'Hair

It seems that Petition No. 2493 is making its regular appearance around the country. This is a regular phenomenon that surfaces from time to time. The idea that keeps cropping up is that Madelyn Murray O'Hair has petitioned the Federal Communications Commission to take all Christian broadcasting off of the airwaves. This is supported to be known as Petition No. 2493.

Thirteen years ago there was ac-

tually a Petition No. 2493. Mrs. O'Hair had nothing to do with it. Two men from California petitioned the Federal Communications Commission that the agency not license any additional Christian radio stations. The Christian radio stations already on the air were to be left alone, and the petition had nothing to do with the playing of Christian music on the air. The Federal Communications Commission denied the petition in 1975. Since

that time it has been a dead issue.

Mrs. O'Hair has caused plenty of concern for Christians across the nation, and she has tried to cause more concern that she has been able to. She is the one who is trying to get the slogan, "In God We Trust," taken off of our currency. She declares she is an atheist and wants the point made clear.

But she is not responsible for 2493. And no one else is either, for that mat-

ter. The petitions that show up from time to time on which someone requests signatures could best be thrown in the trash. For many years the FCC received a million pieces of mail annually concerning this petition and had to hire extra help to deal with the problem. The petition, though dead, was still costing the taxpayers a great deal of money for handling the mail.

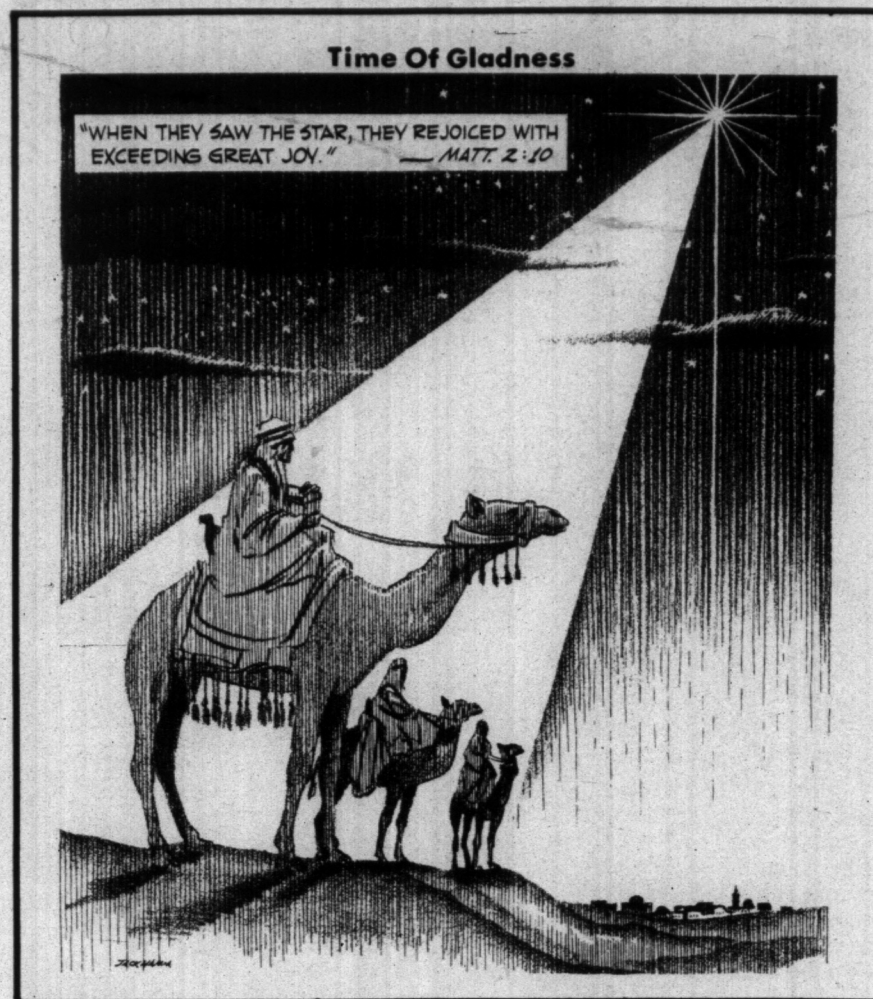
William Murray, Mrs. O'Hair's

Nearly 250 churches were planted in one volunteer effort in the Philippines.

Southern Baptists have lowest resignation/loss rate of any Protestant missions force.

Christian son, says his mother keeps circulating the petitions in order to embarrass Christians.

Whatever the reason for it's surfacing periodically, the petition simply needs to be thrown in the waste basket.



Hymns Baptists sing . . .

"Go, Tell It on the Mountain"

By William J. Reynolds

John Wesley Work Jr., teacher of Latin and history at Fisk University early in this century, heard someone sing this refrain. He shaped the melody, harmonized the tune, and added original stanzas.

The song was included in a small collection he compiled in collaboration with his brother, Frederick J. Work, and it was published in Nashville in 1907. "Go, Tell It on the Mountain" dates from this publication.

Christmas experiences at Fisk University, as recalled by John W. Work III, was exciting times. Early each Christmas morning about five o'clock, the Fisk Jubilee Singers walked around the campus singing Christmas songs. Their favorites were "Go, Tell It on the Mountain," and "Glory to the Newborn King."

After the early morning singing, the students and faculty gathered in the

dining hall for a brief Christmas service and breakfast. The tables were well decorated and glowing candles brightened the room. "Sunday-best clothes" were the order of the day.

Songs of Christmas reflect many facets of the Christmas story, Mary's baby, the manger scene, the heavenly host, the shepherds, the Wise Men, and the star. Some are quite songs, some are rousing, some are slow, and some are spirited.

"Go, Tell It on the Mountain" is a joyful clarion call to proclaim from the highest peak that the Savior is born. Here is an expression of joy and ecstasy for the poor, the downtrodden, the lonely, and the insignificant. This declaration reminds us again at each Christmas that Jesus is in the world — that he was born in Bethlehem.

William J. Reynolds is Professor of Church Music at Southwestern Seminary.

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New ties with Nicaragua follow Hurricane Joan

By Art Toalston

MANAGUA, Nicaragua (BP) — More than six years after Southern Baptist missionaries left Nicaragua, new ties with Baptists there are on the horizon. Doors may open for post-hurricane relief efforts by Southern Baptist volunteers, reported Joe Bruce, director of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's work in Middle America and Canada.

Bruce, who spent three days in Nicaragua in late November, also said officials at a university and a hospital related to the Baptist Convention of Nicaragua have requested sister relationships with Baptist institutions in the United States.

Hurricane Joan cut a 200-mile path of ruin across Nicaragua in late October, killing more than 100 people and destroying more than 29,000 dwellings. It stands as the country's second-worst natural disaster, topped only by the 1972 earthquake that pummeled the Managua area.

Bruce was scheduled to return to Nicaragua the week of Dec. 5 to develop an action plan for relief help. Expected to accompany him were Garry Eudy, associate mission administrator, and Russell Fox, a Southern Baptist missionary and con-

struction engineer in Honduras who will oversee volunteer efforts in Nicaragua if plans proceed.

Southern Baptists likely will focus on the coastal city of Bluefields, where most buildings and houses were destroyed or severely damaged, Bruce said.

A back annex of Zion Baptist Church in Bluefields was destroyed; an adjacent elementary school operated by the church lost a wall and its roof; and the parsonage sustained extensive damage, Bruce said. Southern Baptist volunteers also may help with home repairs, he said.

During his first visit, Bruce gave the Baptist convention a \$5,000 check from Southern Baptist disaster relief funds for the purchase of hammers, saws, nails, and other items to help people repair their homes.

"One of the big problems is going to be securing materials," Bruce said.

"There are little or none in the country." Materials may be purchased in Costa Rica and sent to Nicaragua by boat.

If sending volunteer teams does not prove feasible, Bruce will explore other avenues of Southern Baptist assistance.

He also met with officials at the 1,500-student Polytechnic University of Nicaragua, who expressed interest in a sister relationship with a Southern Baptist university. The institution in Managua is the only Baptist university in Central America and one of the few evangelical universities in Latin America, he said. It also operates a nursing school.

Officials of Baptist Hospital in Managua also indicated interest in a sister relationship with a Southern Baptist hospital and in short-term volunteer anesthesiologists, Bruce said. When an eye clinic opens, ophthalmologists also may be needed.

Bruce said he sensed openness among Nicaraguan Baptist leaders to ways Southern Baptists might cooperate in developing their work.

(Continued on page 4)

**No BAPTIST
RECORD
next week**



Associations receive special awards

These are the winners of special awards given during the annual directors of missions banquet held during the Mississippi Baptist Convention. The awards are given by the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board based on criteria developed by the various program departments of the MBCB. All pictured are directors of missions unless otherwise noted. From left, seated, are Nolan Houston, Montgomery Assn., Distinguished Church Music Associational Award; J.C. Mitchell, Lowndes Assn., Award of Excellence, Category VI (7,001-10,500 resident members); Holmes Carlisle, Scott Assn., Award of Excellence, Category IV (4,001-5,000); James Webster, director of church service, Hinds-Madison Assn., Distinguished Study Course Associational Award; Charles Nickolic, director of recreation

and retreat, Hinds-Madison Assn., Distinguished Stewardship Associational Award; Standing, from left: William P. Smith III, Lee Assn., Distinguished Cooperative Missions Associational Award; Richard Spencer, Itawamba Assn., Category I (up to 2,000); J. C. Renfroe, Rankin Assn., Distinguished Sunday School Associational Award of Excellence, Category VII (10,500-50,000); Kermit Sharp, Kemper Assn., Distinguished Church Administration Pastoral Ministries Associational Award; Marvin Bibb, retired, and Guy Hughes, recently elected DOM, Yalobusha Assn., Award of Excellence, Category II (2,001-3,000); Charles Stubblefield, Tishomingo Assn., Distinguished Church Training Associational Award.

Search Committee asks for prayers, recommendations

Dear Fellow Mississippi Baptists:

After many years of dedicated and effective service to Mississippi Baptists, Dr. Earl Kelly has announced his retirement effective August 15, 1989. Your Executive Committee has now been charged with the heavy responsibility of prayerfully seeking, finding, and nominating a person to serve as the Executive Director of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board.

Each of us brings to this committee a personal commitment to seek to know and to do only the will of our Heavenly Father in reference to this position so vitally important to the cause of Christ in Mississippi.

As we begin this task we are deeply cognizant of our need of divine wisdom, strength, and guidance. Please pray for us daily.

Also, we welcome the input and/or recommendation of any interested Mississippi Baptists. I assure you every recommendation will be reviewed by the committee. Please put these in writing and mail them to any Executive Committee member.

Thank you for your support and may God bless.

Devotedly,

Eugene H. Dobbs

Chairman, Executive Committee

P. O. Box 299

Philadelphia, MS 39350

Mississippi ranks 7th in study awards, with 41,788

NASHVILLE — Mississippi ranked seventh among state conventions in study course awards received for 1987-88 with 41,788, according to statistics compiled in the church study course records office at the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

Hinds Madison Association was 17th among the top 25 associations receiving study course awards with 4,877.

First Church, Jackson, led the state in study course awards with 621. First Church, Sharon, was second with 539, and First Church, Clinton, was third with 488.

Texas led all states in the Southern Baptist Convention in total church study course awards with 97,510.

Second Church, Houston, led the SBC in total study course awards received with 4,001.

Union Baptist Association ranked first among SBC associations receiving study course awards with 11,485.

For the year, the number of persons enrolled in the study course system rose 14 percent over last year to 1.16 million, according to William R. Cox, church study course coordinator at the board.

Cox said 140,794 people or an average of 2,700 per week entered the study course award system this year. The number of SBC churches participating has increased from 35 percent in 1978 to 50.1 percent in 1988, he said.

Accrediting body places Clarke on probation

By Tim Nicholas

Clarke College last week was placed on probation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, according to an announcement by the association's Commission on Colleges.

James Rogers, executive director of the commission, told the Baptist Record that the Newton junior college failed to comply with associational conditions of eligibility in planning and finances, and in criteria for eligibility in institutional effectiveness, library, governance, and finance.

"Any time an institution is placed on probation, there are serious deficiencies," said Rogers.

However, Mississippi College President Lewis Nobles said that "this obviously is a matter of concern for Mississippi Baptists, but it is certainly not a matter over which we should become alarmed at this time."

Mississippi College operates Clarke as a division, but continues to keep separate books. A year ago, the Mississippi Baptist Convention voted for Clarke a line item budget amount of \$55,095 for deficit reduction. This year, the convention voted a \$200,000 line item to the school without stipulation. The line item is for one year only.

Rogers said a school placed on probation is given a year to correct deficiencies and report back to the

association. After one year on probation, "the Commission on Colleges has the option of removing the institution from accreditation or continuing accreditation for another year," said Rogers. "There is no allowance for more than two years on probation."

A year ago, the accrediting team from the association denied reaffirmation to Clarke. That is considered a warning that compliance is lacking, but is not as severe as probation.

Said Nobles, "In view of the fact that there was very real concern shown over the financial status of Clarke College when the accreditation team met and consequently with no additional new money going into the operational budget, this most recent step was the most logical one for the Southern Association to take."

Nobles considers the new line item amount for Clarke passed at the recent Mississippi Baptist Convention to be \$55,095 for debt reduction, and the rest for operations. "The recent action of the Mississippi Baptist Convention making available as much as \$145,000 will certainly do much to strengthen the operational program at Clarke College."

He added that "The status of accreditation is such that all work taken there is fully accredited and is transferable to any other institution just as it has been in the past."

Vines seeks recommendations for key SBC appointments

By Dan Martin

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (BP) — Southern Baptist Convention President Jerry Vines has issued an open letter seeking recommendations of people to be appointed to key committees to serve at the 1989 SBC annual meeting in Las Vegas, Nev.

In his letter to "all Southern Baptists, persons in elected positions and state convention executives," Vines said he is "beginning the process which will result in nominees for the 1989 Committee on Committees, Resolutions Committee, Credentials Committee, and Tellers Committee."

According to the SBC constitution and bylaws, the convention president appoints the four key committees that will serve June 13-15, 1989, at the annual meeting in Las Vegas. The president appoints the Committee on Committees and Resolutions Committees "in conference with" the two vice presidents; the Credentials Committee "in consultation with" the vice presidents; and the Tellers Committee "in consultation" with the SBC registration secretary.

The Committee on Committees submits nominees for the Committee on Nominations for election by messengers to the convention; the Resolutions Committee deals with all resolutions introduced during the annual meeting; the Credentials Committee oversees registration and the Tellers Committee tabulates all votes taken at the convention.

Vines, pastor of First Baptist Church of Jacksonville, Fla., said he would welcome recommendations from "all Southern Baptists." He added: "My commitment is to find the best Southern Baptists for these committee appointments. I will make my appointments as prayerfully and carefully as possible."

He said he has received the names of two people from Virginia nominated to serve on the SBC Committee on Committees by messengers to the annual meeting of the Baptist General Association of Virginia.

The BGAV, meeting Nov. 15-16, directed its own committee on boards and committees to nominate two peo-

ple whom Virginians could ask Vines to appoint on his Committee on Committees on behalf of Virginia Baptists.

Vines responded to the Virginia action by saying: "I welcome recommendations from any area of our Southern Baptist life. Therefore, if the brothers and sisters in Virginia want to recommend someone to me, I will receive their recommendations along with any other names Virginia Baptists want to send to me."

He told Baptist Press he would not give the names sent by the BGAV any more weight than a recommendation sent by an individual Virginia Baptist.

"To do so would run the risk of connectionalism," he said. "As I understand it, we as Baptists do not believe that one Baptist entity is to exercise authority over another Baptist entity. By that we mean that a Baptist association cannot be dictated to by a Baptist convention or vice versa. All of these entities are independent and autonomous."

Vines, who was elected during the 1988 SBC annual meeting in San Antonio, Texas, said he has conferred a number of times with First Vice President Darrell Robinson, pastor of Dauphin Way Baptist Church in Mobile, Ala., and Second Vice President Rudy Hernandez, pastor of Metro Park Baptist Church in San Antonio, Texas.

"I will be seeking input from them several more times in the future. I am taking the (SBC) constitution seriously," Vines said.

Vines listed qualities he wants and does not want in people he appoints:

"I want people who are supportive of our Southern Baptist work. I want people who are committed to our priority as Southern Baptists — winning people to Christ. I am more interested in that they are witnessing people than that they are wealthy people."

"I am looking for committed Southern Baptists, not merely prominent Southern Baptists."

"I do not want people who have personal hostilities or grievances which

would cause them to use a committee appointment as a platform for pushing their own agenda."

Vines asked that the recommendations be sent to him by Feb. 1, 1989, at First Baptist Church, 124 Ashley Street, Jacksonville, Fla. 32202. The envelopes should be designated on the lower left hand side, "SBC Committee Recommendation."

He asked people making nominations to include information on whether the nominee has served on any SBC committee or board previously, and whether anyone in the nominee's church currently is serving or previously has served.

He also asked that specific information be provided, including the full name of the nominee, correctly spelled; complete mailing address, including ZIP code; home and business telephones, including area code; whether the nominee is in a clergy or denominationally related post or is a layperson.

The correct title or occupation of the nominee — whether clergy or layperson — should be included, as should the full business address.

In addition, the recommendations should include the nominee's church affiliation, the church mailing address and telephone number, total church membership, amount the church gave through the Cooperative Program unified budget during the 1987-88 associational year, and the percentage of the church budget the CP gifts represented.

Nominations also should include the number of baptisms in the church during the 1987-1988 associational year, whether the nominee plans to attend the SBC in Las Vegas, and the state convention in which the nominee lives.

The recommendations also should include the nominator's name, title, mailing address, and home and business telephone numbers.

Copies of a form on which to submit nominations are available from Vines' church.

Dan Martin is BP news editor.

Work starts on center for Caribbean Baptists

HOLLYWOOD, Fla. (BP) — Baptists broke ground Dec. 8 for the Caribbean Baptist Communication Center in Hollywood, Fla., a \$1.2 million facility that will produce Christian literature and broadcast material for the people of the Caribbean.

Construction will take about seven months and the center is to start functioning fully next August, said Bill Richardson, Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board director for Brazil and the Caribbean.

At least six Southern Baptist missionaries and one journeyman will work at the center. Several Caribbean Baptists also will work there, including Arthur Edgar, director of Caribbean Christian Publications.

The two entities that will occupy the building are Caribbean Christian Publications and the Caribbean Baptist Media Center. The publication operation is now in El Paso, Texas, where the Foreign Mission Board's Baptist Spanish Publishing House also is located.

Southern Baptists established the media center for the Caribbean in Nassau, the Bahamas, in 1980, upon recommendation by the Caribbean Baptist Fellowship. However, Florida will be a more convenient location, Richardson said.

Located 30 minutes from the Miami airport, the Hollywood location will facilitate travel to and from the Caribbean and will reduce material shipping costs, he added.

Tupelo music minister retires

David Larrimore has announced his retirement, effective Jan. 1, after 36 years of serving churches in three different states. Larrimore for the past 19 years has been on the staff of Calvary Church, Tupelo.



Larrimore

Larrimore received his B.A. degree from William Carey College, and obtained his M.S.M. at New Orleans Seminary.

He has served at Immanuel, Hattiesburg; Second, Indianola; Rio Vista, New Orleans; Fifteenth Avenue, Meridian; Trinity, Lake Charles, La.; and First, Cullman, Ala.

Larrimore has participated in missions to Alaska and Africa. He has been on the faculty at Ridgecrest and Gulfshore and has conducted numerous revivals.

After retirement, he and his wife, Jeanette, plan to make their home in Tupelo. Their daughter, Sherry Vance, also lives in Tupelo with her husband, Jud, and their three children, Judson, Joel, and Peter.

New ties follow hurricane

(Continued from page 3)

He is "not sure yet what all the long-term implications will be. But the door certainly is not closed to the possibility of having some career personnel in there at some time in the future," he said.

The Baptist Convention of Nicaragua encompasses some 70 to 80 churches. Two Southern Baptist couples worked in Nicaragua until 1982, when Nicaraguan Baptist leaders voted to recommend that the missionaries leave because of the "sociopolitical and ideological situation." The first couple, Stanley and Glenna Stamps of Mississippi, began a literature ministry in 1976 at the invitation of Nicaraguan Baptists and later opened a bookstore. A second couple came in 1980 to do music ministry. A Southern Baptist volunteer taught at the Baptist seminary in Managua from 1984 to 1986. The Stampses are now in Honduras.

American Baptist Convention work in Nicaragua dates back to 1917 and still continues.

In another development, a volunteer team of nine Southern Baptists preached in a simultaneous revival campaign in Nicaragua two weeks after the hurricane. The campaign was sponsored by another Baptist group, the International Baptist Convention of Nicaragua.

The International Convention also wants ties with Southern Baptists, reported volunteer team leader Ernesto Chaparro, pastor of Canaan Baptist Church in Corona, N.Y.

"We had freedom to preach the gospel," even in a post-hurricane state of emergency declared by the Sandinista government, Chaparro said. "In nine days, nobody stopped us to give us regulations or anything like that."

The International convention's leaders told Chaparro they want "any kind of help" from Southern Baptists, including relief assistance, missionary personnel, religious education materials, and hymnals, he said.

The volunteer team took in 1,400 pounds of clothing and about \$4,000 in medicines and donations for hurricane victims.

Art Toalston writes for the FMB.

SBC officers, state executives discuss variety of concerns

By Linda Lawson

NASHVILLE (BP) — A Dec. 1 dialogue session between the top three officers of the Southern Baptist Convention and 30 executive directors of state conventions on issues of mutual concern was termed a positive step, participants agreed.

SBC President Jerry Vines, pastor of First Baptist Church of Jacksonville, Fla.; First Vice President Darrell Robinson, pastor of Dauphin Way Baptist Church of Mobile, Ala.; and Second Vice President Rudy Hernandez, pastor of Metro Park Baptist Church of San Antonio, Texas, attended the two-hour session at the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board at the invitation of the executive directors. A similar session was held in 1986.

"We wanted to hear from Dr. Vines and the two vice presidents about the state of the denomination and how they are willing to move into the task

of putting us back together after 10 years of controversy," said Ernest Myers, executive director of the Nevada Baptist Convention and chairman of the organization of executive directors.

Issues discussed included declines in Cooperative Program unified budget giving, budget cuts in many state conventions and SBC agencies, presidential appointments, and trustees of institutions and agencies.

The session was covered by Baptist Press under background rules, which allow no direct quotations and no attribution of statements. The three SBC officers and the three officers of the executive directors organization spoke with Baptist Press after the meeting.

"I felt it was important to come and have dialogue with these men who are on the cutting edge of Baptist work at the state level," said Vines.

Concerning Cooperative Program giving, Vines said he plans to "study and receive input to determine where the increases and decreases are coming from." He cited his church, which he said is increasing its 1989 Cooperative Program gifts by 20 percent over 1988.

The No. 1 goal of his presidency is "to set a tone and create an atmosphere for healing to occur," he said.

Jack Johnson, executive director of the Arizona Southern Baptist Convention and secretary of the organization of executive directors, called the meeting "very positive."

"There is no question that these men (SBC officers) are very sincere in promoting a healing process. However, I think reconciliation is going to take a long time," he said.

Linda Lawson writes for the Sunday School Board.

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capsules

Journeymen applications due

RICHMOND, Va. — College graduates who want to work as journeymen with the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board must have their applications postmarked by Jan. 15.

The journeyman program is for college graduates with four-year degrees. They must be 26 years old or younger by the deadline and interested in using their skills to assist missionaries on overseas mission fields for two years.

Those interested in applying for the 1989-90 program should contact the Foreign Mission Board immediately. Call Pamela Smith in the Personnel Selection Department at (804) 353-0151 or write to the department at P. O. Box 6767, Richmond, Va., 23230.

Race relations conference planned

NASHVILLE (BP) — To help improve racial relationships within the Southern Baptist Convention, the Christian Life Commission will host here a special two-day conference to begin on Jan. 16, the holiday commemorating the late Martin Luther King Jr.

"Racism remains an entrenched moral problem in our society as well as within the Southern Baptist Convention. It discloses itself sometimes with directness and sometimes with great subtlety," Richard Land, executive director of the Christian Life Commission, said in announcing the race relations conference.

The conference, scheduled at First Baptist Church, Nashville, begins at 2 p.m. Jan. 16, and concludes at 12:30 p.m. Jan. 17. Participants will stay at the Hermitage Hotel in Nashville. The conference's registration fee is \$30.

Ethnics to start churches in Vegas

ATLANTA (BP) — Leaders of three Southern Baptist ethnic fellowships have announced plans to start new churches in Las Vegas prior to the convention's annual meeting there next June.

The three churches will be the first congregations in the city among American Indians, Cambodians, and Romanians, said Oscar Romo, director of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's language missions division.

Bobby Sunderland, director of the board's direct evangelism division, said the new congregations will increase to seven the number of language churches launched in Las Vegas in the past few months. A new Filipino congregation has baptized 17 people since its recent founding, he added.

The strategy dovetails with Home Mission Board goals of starting 25 churches in the state prior to the mid-June annual meeting.

Southern Baptists gave \$8 million for hunger in 1987; still there are 500 million people on the verge of starvation.

Europeans accept seminary

RUSCHLIKON, Switzerland (BP) — Leaders of the Baptist Theological Seminary here, have approved a transfer of ownership of the seminary's property to European Baptists and have begun discussion of a possible statement of religious principles the continent's Baptists hold in common.

FMB trustees urged the seminary to draft a statement to "give expression to the seminary's biblical commitment and to which seminary teachers would subscribe."

During a Nov. 25-26 meeting, the seminary's executive board approved the property transfer, as well as the FMB recommendations. Members also adopted a recommendation of its own, calling on the European Baptist Federation to form a study commission "to produce a concentrated statement of Baptist principles which are common to European Baptists."

Initial deliberations on the seminary board's request likely will come next April.

CP falls low

NASHVILLE (BP) — Receipts for the Southern Baptist Convention's unified budget fell to the lowest level in 37 months during November.

The national Cooperative Program received \$9,055,571, announced Harold C. Bennett, president and treasurer of the SBC Executive Committee. The receipts were 4.73 percent below receipts for November 1987.

Southern gets gifts

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP) — Gifts from charitable foundations and financial institutions have helped Southern Seminary secure more than \$10 million in cash and pledges for the school's Campus Center Complex here.

The campus center, projected to cost \$15.9 million, will be built in three phases. Construction on the first phase of the center, which will house a comprehensive physical fitness and wellness facility, student commons area and lounges, and a chapel, began in October and is expected to be completed by the summer of 1990.

Men's teleconference is set for Jan. 7

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP) — The Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission has announced plans for the 1989 Baptist Men's Teleconference. The Saturday morning, Jan. 7, event will focus on "Missions Involvement Through Evangelism," said commission President James H. Smith.

The telecast will be broadcast live simultaneously over the Baptist Telecommunication Network and the American Christian Television System. It will air at 1 p.m., Central Standard Time.

Richard T. McCartney, vice president of the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission, will host the teleconference.

Viewers will be able to join panel discussions through toll-free telephone linkups.

Access will be over Spacenet 1, channel 21, and Galaxy 3, channel 7. BTN will broadcast an unscrambled signal.

First, Laurel's celebration reaches its grand finale

By Anne W. McWilliams

At First Church, Laurel, a year of centennial events reached the grand finale with Celebration Sunday on Dec. 4. The church that began meeting in a boxcar 100 years ago has in the past decade given \$1,500,000 to missions. This year, in 15 key events and at least 17 special projects, 527 persons have served under direction of Dell (Mrs. Vincent) Scoper, Centennial Committee chairman.

In the morning service Dec. 4, Mrs. Scoper read the dedication of the program brochure to Larry W. Kennedy, pastor at Laurel since 1978. Kennedy, dressed in 19th-century style, preached on Hebrews 12:1-3, "Pressing On."

Pyramids of 150 poinsettias, forming two Christmas trees, set the stage for the parade of banners. Graham Smith, director, Church Music, Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, and a former staff member at First, Laurel, was narrator as banner carriers lifted up intricately wrought satin symbols of names for Jesus, such as "Lion of Judah" and "Holy One." Later in the service, Smith presented special music, "Holy Ground." Also he brought greetings from Dan and Lydia Jones, missionaries sent out from First, Laurel, to Korea.

A church history book, just off the press, was presented, and the author, Pauline Hester, a member of First, Laurel, was recognized. She said she had worked for two years on the 262-page book, *Our Heritage: A Foundation of Faith*. The book's outline follows the administrations of the various pastors. One of them, L. G. Gates, served there for 40 years, 1905-45.

The centennial hymn, which the congregation sang, was borrowed, with permission, from *Dimension*, a WMU magazine. The writer of the hymn, Stan Pethel, faculty member at Berry College in Georgia, did a choir arrangement of it for the Laurel church.

On Dec. 4, a homecoming "box lunch" in the Family Life Center followed the morning service. Old-fashioned dress contestants and beard brigade contestants paraded. Edward McMillan, representing the Mississippi Baptist Historical Commission, presented a centennial certificate to the church. Don McGregor, editor, and Earl Kelly, executive director, brought greetings from the Baptist Record and the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board.

Of the year's special projects, Heritage Hall was one of the most time-consuming and also will be long-lasting. Under direction of Mr. and Mrs. Don Norman, the former fellowship hall was converted into a room for display of pictures and memorabilia relating to the church's history. One display showed the church's WMU centennial quilt. Actually, the new glass display cases on the walls and in the center of the room have made the place a real museum.

Last Jan. 31, Super Sunday kicked off the year's key events. Then on Valentine's Day, church families gathered for a "Circles of Love" basket lunch. Twice, in spring and fall, church members, in small groups, met in homes for food and fellowship at Sunday evening service time, their pastor spoke to all the groups simultaneously on the ACTS TV channel.

A Heritage Fair featured a tasting



A flowerbed on the front lawn at First Church, Laurel, spells out the church's age, 100. Flowers have been changed seasonally during this centennial year. Contributions by Mrs. Reuben Lott made these plantings possible. In the background are Dell Scoper, chairman of the Centennial Committee, and the pastor, Larry W. Kennedy.

bee of the recipes contained in the Centennial Cookbook, plus games, contests, and other fun things. The cookbook was one of four "for sale" items of the year. The other three were the church history book, commemorative plates, and note stationery with the church's bell tower depicted on the front (this illustration was by John Rentz, church member and area artist).

May was "Sharing Love with Laurel" Month. Individuals baked and delivered cakes to the city's public servants such as the police department and the Welfare Department.

Special Sundays honored former pastors: L. G. Gates; Jimmy Parrish, 1945-49; and T. R. McKibbens, 1949-67. Two other former pastors were Bob Marsh, 1967-1973, and Jim Keith, 1974-1977. Keith preached a revival in Laurel in September, and Marsh preached there one Sunday in November.

One month, Lydia Ruffin, Laurel native, now a professional singer and resident of St. Louis, Mo., gave a concert. Before Harvest Day at Thanksgiving, senior adults were recognized. All members of the church for 50 years or more received gold cross pins.

Flower beds, spelling "100" and changed seasonally, were planted on the church lawn, thanks to gifts from Mrs. Reuben Lott.

Dramatic monologues from the past were presented at intervals all year, under direction of the minister of activities, Ronney Webb.

The church's television ministry presented interviews concerning the key events and projects and also interpreted the centennial logo, a cross set in a foundation of stones — "Our Heritage: A Foundation of Faith."

Other committees produced a historical slide presentation and began work for preservation and cataloging of historical materials for the future. A centennial pictorial directory will be released early in 1989.

The church entered a centennial float in Laurel's Christmas parade on Dec. 3.

On Dec. 4, the pastor awarded plaques of appreciation to Pauline Hester, for writing the history; to Don and Von Norman, for Heritage Hall; and to Dell Scoper, for leadership of the Centennial Committee.



Blondie (Mrs. Reuben) Lott, standing, pauses to greet Dell Scoper. Mrs. Lott, a member of the Centennial Landscape Committee, was one of the winners in the old-fashioned dress parade.



Larry Kennedy, pastor at First, Laurel, poses in the old-fashioned outfit he wore to preach the sermon on Celebration Sunday, Dec. 4.

Devotional

Churches re-enact the Christmas story

Part III

By Waurine Ferguson Walley

And so it was, that while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn (Luke 2:6-7).

With great depth of feeling, the narrator unfolds the age-old story to the enthralled listeners, but to them it seems brand new! God's love is like that... both ageless and forever new.

From the dark stage, only the outline of a cave-like structure can be seen until a soft, yellow light casts a warm glow around the faces of three people who represent the holy family. A feeling of peace and happiness and joy enter the hearts of those who watch.



Walley

Mary lovingly wraps her baby in cloths and places him in the only item in the stable that could be a bed... a manger normally used for feeding animals. Even though it is natural to be sad that our savior had to be born in such poor circumstances, we should think of how it symbolized his humility in service to mankind throughout his entire ministry and how it should be a guide to teach us how we should serve others.

Though the rest of the story seems anti-climactic, it still plays a beautiful part in our celebration of Christmas. The shepherds, the angels, and the wise men have their own stories to tell.

The joy of the angels as they praised and glorified God helps us to understand that we can experience joy in praising and glorifying our Heavenly Father for his great and unfailing love to us.

The shepherds went with haste to find the Christ child and on their return trip, told everyone they met the "Good News." If we, like the shepherds, without hesitation accept the one who came to give us eternal life and if we enthusiastically tell others of him, we can experience the joy of the shepherds.

The wise men never turned back from their search, though their trek was long and treacherous. Endurance and courage may be a necessary part of every Christian's life who strives to live close to Christ and sincerely worship him. We may experience the joy of the wise men when we seek him and worship him in the proper spirit.

My prayer this Christmas is that all of us who call ourselves Christians will not be mere bystanders to the events that happened on the first Christmas, but that we will commit ourselves to become active participants in the forward march of Christianizing the world!

Waurine (Renee) Walley is a member of Woodland Hills Church, Jackson, and an employee of the BAPTIST RECORD.



At right, Harry K. Phillips receives a plaque of appreciation from Bill Baker, chairman of the missions committee of Benton-Tippah Associations where Phillips has served as director of missions for 28 years. He retires at the end of 1988.

Benton-Tippah DOM retires

Harry K. Phillips is retiring Dec. 31 after serving as director of missions for the Benton-Tippah Baptist Associations for 28 years.

A reception was given in honor of Harry and Viola Phillips at the associational missions center in Ripley, Dec. 11. They received a money tree and a plaque in appreciation of their service. Mrs. Phillips served as office secretary for a number of years.

Phillips, a native of Alcorn County attended Mississippi State and taught school in Alcorn County. After military service, he graduated from Union University and then Southwestern Seminary.

He was ordained by the Tishomingo Chapel Baptist Church in 1947 and

held pastorates in Tennessee, Texas, Oklahoma, and Mississippi until 1955 when he became pastor of Walnut Baptist Church. He became DOM for Benton-Tippah in December, 1960.

He and Mrs. Phillips have four children: Harry D.; Gary L.; Mrs. Judith Hopper; and Mrs. Cynthia Hopper. They have 12 grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

Phillips has served in various civic responsibilities including 20 years as a director of the Bank of Walnut, a director in the Tippah County Resource and Development Program, the Northeast Mississippi Planning and Development District, and the Northeast Mississippi Regional Mental Health Council.

D.Min. degree meet to be held

NEW ORLEANS — Persons interested in the doctor of ministry degree program at New Orleans Seminary are invited to meet Jan. 6, 1:30-3 p.m. at the Baptist Building in Jackson.

Others may write the Doctor of Ministry Office, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 3939 Gentilly Blvd., New Orleans, La., 70126, or call (504) 282-4455, for more information on the Doctor of Ministry degree program.

Business administrators will meet Jan. 26

A church business administrators' conference will take place Jan. 26 at Woodland Hills Baptist Church, Jackson. The program will begin at 9 a.m. and conclude at 3:15 p.m.

The administrators will hear discussions concerning developing job descriptions, performance evaluation, personal computers in ministry, and desk top publishing.

Leaders for the conference include Randy Spring, vice president of personnel at Trustmark Bank in Jackson; Barry Hardy, business administrator at Broadmoor Baptist Church, Jackson; Randy Tompkins, consultant in the Sunday School Department, MBCB; and Jennings Orr, business office director, MBCB.

The conference is jointly sponsored by the Hinds-Madison Association and the Church Administration-Pastoral Ministries Department, MBCB.

To register for the conference, write Julius Thompson, Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205. There is no charge for the conference.

Letters to the editor

Letters to the editor must be limited to 300 words and the editor reserves the right to trim those that are longer. Editorial prerogatives must be reserved under all circumstances, and the opinions of the letter writers do not necessarily reflect the views of the staff of the Baptist Record. Only signed letters will be used, but the writer may request that his name be withheld. The withholding of names will be at the discretion of the editor.

SBC archives

Editor:

Let me alert you and your readers to a tremendously valuable collection of resources on Southern Baptists. The largest collection of materials on Southern Baptist life and history is located in the Southern Baptist Convention Building in Nashville, Tennessee.

Cooperative Program dollars enable the Historical Commission, SBC, to operate the Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives. This world center for Baptist studies contains:

- 70,000 + annuals of associations and conventions.
- 20,000 + books
- 15,000 + reels of microfilm
- 4,000 + pamphlets
- Large files of Baptist newspapers, periodicals, audio and video recordings, photographs, manuscripts, and denominational archives

The SBHLA is open to all researchers. You and your readers are welcome to use its resources. Contact the staff before your visit so your research needs can be met well.

For a free brochure on the SBHLA, write the Historical Commission, SBC, 901 Commerce Street, Suite 400,

Nashville, TN 37203. Or call 615-244-0344.

Charles W. Dewese
The Historical Commission

Kinder shocked

Editor:

I recently took my five-year-old son to see the Universal Pictures production of "The Land Beyond Time." The movie is rated "G" and is an excellent children's show.

I was appalled, however, by the cartoon, "Family Dog," that was shown prior to the movie. The so-called "humor" used in this cartoon was not fit to be shown to an adult audience, let alone to children. In fact, it was quite sick!

The manager of the theatre informed me that the cartoon was part of the film that the movie came on and that he was obligated to show it if he was going to show the movie. He agreed with me that it was not fitting to show to children and urged me to send a complaint to Universal Pictures, which I have done.

In addition to lodging my complaint with the producers, I would like to warn other unsuspecting parents about the cartoon so that they can protect their children from it. By the time

I realized what was going on, it was too late. I looked down to see my son trying to cover his eyes and ears! At least children understand what is in good taste and what is not!

Don G. Tillman
Springhill Baptist Church
Franklin County

Education — at all costs?

Editor:

The drug problem is America's and Mississippi's greatest threat. Next to drugs, Mississippi's greatest problem is her poor education situation. On May 23, money hungry for funds to beef up his educational package at all costs, Gov. Ray Mabus compounded the drugs and poor education situation by signing into law liquor advertising, the deadliest form of education.

Soon, with the governor's permission, there will be in all our homes and throughout our state (as especially the enormous liquor industry can make and keep in the forefront) a most enticing advertising campaign to deceive the very young, impressionable, and unwary into experimenting with or continuing to use this No. 1 deadliest drug.

Mississippi will become Alcohol Alley, and then down Skid Row we will go!

"The trouble with trouble is it starts out like fun," Unknown.

Mrs. William T. Myers, Sr.
Hattiesburg



Powerline for teens

SOUTHERN BAPTIST RADIO-TV COMMISSION / FORT WORTH, TX 76150

Keep feelings to myself?

QUESTION:

I have a terrific friend and we would do anything for each other. We sit for hours and talk. But I feel that I'm being a burden when I talk all the time about my problems, because she doesn't really tell me about hers. If I lost her friendship I don't know what I would do, but I don't know whether it's better to keep my feelings to myself or to risk imposing.

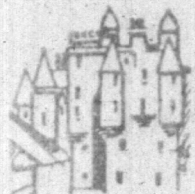
ANSWER:

The Bible says that the way to have a friend is to be a friend. This means that friendship is a give-and-take situation, and we must be willing to invest our own time and effort if we expect to draw that from someone else. Some people are not willing to give of themselves, or they don't feel they

know how to do that effectively. Others are not willing to accept what a friend may be trying to give. They may think it is a sign of weakness to admit that they need others.

One thing to consider is that not all of us have the same gift to share. Your special friend seems to have a talent for listening and empathizing. Maybe at this point she does not feel the need of talking to you about problems, but she may need one of your special gifts, such as encouragement or interest in her activities. It may give her a very warm feeling to be able to help you by listening, so don't hold back from letting her give you that gift.

The important thing is for each of you to feel the freedom to be yourselves and relate openly to each other. Talk with your friend and let her know that you are there for her any time she might need you. If you balance your times of confiding in her with times of mutual fun and sharing interests together, you will not feel anxious about becoming dependent or imposing on her. Share your joys together as well as your problems.



Faces and places

by Anne W. Thburn McWilliams



Because we have been given much

When someone in my family asks, "What do you want for Christmas?" I have to stop and think. What do I want? It's hard to know. I already have so much.

December has been one long party. I've eaten enough to last a year — Sunday School party, lunch in Laurel, Open House at the Kellys, Baptist Record party at Renee's, supper at Rosa's, dinner in Memphis at Wanda's.

In *Royal Service*, I read a letter from missionaries in Mozambique: "We'll never forget the children here with swollen stomachs. One child had a towel wrapped around his body; one had nothing. People at one station we visited had not eaten for eight days."

Last night, it was cold and dark when I got home from work, but W. D. soon had a fire burning, and my favorite supper on the table: turnip greens and baked sweet potatoes, sausage and hot biscuits and syrup. Then we wrapped gifts and added them to the pile already threatening to obscure our twinkling tree.

From Jim McKinley, missionary in Bangladesh, a letter reached my mailbox: "Worst flood in recorded

history of this land . . . millions of houses washed away, food storage buildings with several feet of water, most hospitals partly submerged, people by the thousands, living on top of buildings. One man told me that 1,000 people are living in a four-storied building which I have passed several times. It is incomplete with no plumbing, no water, and no facilities for cooking. May God help us overcome."

Last week at Morrison Heights Church, when the choirs presented "The Singing Christmas Tree," all the parking lots were crowded. I had to park at the one farthest away, and walk across the road in the rain. (Last month during the state Baptist convention in Jackson, some people had to park as far away as Capitol Street and walk four blocks to the church; some had to park at the fairgrounds and transfer to a shuttle bus.)

Baptists in La Mosquitia, Honduras, Pat Wilkerson reported, held their convention in Twimiwala on the south coast near Nicaragua. Rains had fallen hard and long. There was just a small strip of land to walk on. Water covered the ground around the church and surrounded the log stilts underneath it. This didn't stop conven-

tion plans. Everyone who didn't live in the village had to go by dugout or either walk. Some walked six hours, under hard wet conditions, in water chest high in some places, swimming across rivers. Even if a person went by dugout, there was still a walk in waist-high water. Over 200, not counting small children, attended. It was more like a revival than a convention meeting. Nine made professions of faith and asked to be baptized.

I'm not Scrooge. I like celebrating Christmas. But the other day, as I stood as No. 57 in a shopping line, I had plenty of time to think. As I watched all the merchandise piled on the counters, I tried to do some figuring: "If all the money all Southern Baptists paid, during just one Christmas, for presents, decorations, cards, stamps, and food for parties and dinners, were placed into one stack, how many times would the \$84 million Lottie Moon Christmas Offering goal divide into that? Or what if we went ahead with our celebrating, but cut down on the amount spent, enough to triple the amount every one of us gave last year for the Lottie Moon Offering? Would not that be easy?"

Because we have been given much.

Thursday, December 22, 1988

BAPTIST RECORD PAGE 7

The sinister's scissors

By Jeffrey R. Parker

Psalms 51:1-4

Sunday, September 18, was an exciting day in more ways than one as we watched two people give their lives to Christ while at the same time, the baptism overflowed, flooding the entire back section of the church.

It seems there are some days when Satan attacks from every flank as if he is set to cause us to stumble. But God, as always, provided some good men who quickly took care of the flooding problem with very little ribbing aimed at the preacher.

However, the day continued to go pretty much in the same pattern, with the climax coming about 9 that night. Ledge, our four-year-old, decided to make his debut as a barber and soon located a willing vessel. Jeffrey, age 2, who enjoys a good trim, sat quietly as this seasoned stylist worked diligently, removing large portions of his hair. He did leave what appeared to be a few patches of hair which resembled small throw rugs on top of his head. Once completed, Ledge ran into the kitchen screaming, "Come see what Jeffrey's done!" So Sheila followed the innocent darling while dad continued to wash dishes.

Then came this heart-stopping scream which I knew meant trouble. I ran to the bathroom, only to find my wife weeping, with a ball of hair in one hand and a two-year-old punk rocker in the other. We both looked at our once beautiful baby boy, who now looked more like what you might see in a rock concert. I was sick as I looked at open scalp, and quickly with a firm hand gave him four reasons not to do it again.

In the meantime, Ledger was nestled in the confines of his bed with the covers pulled securely over every portion of his body. I thought this was strange until Jeffrey, with tear-filled eyes, responded, "Dedger' did it." My hand, not yet cooled down, clashed with my four-year-old's glutius maximus in a way that would deter any future hair styling.

God reminded me that the child of God often disfigures his or her own looks with Satan's sinful scissors, which must break the heart of God.

Pray that each of us might come clean before God and experience a fresh anointing of the Holy Spirit on our lives!

Jeffrey R. Parker is pastor, Fellowship Church, Meridian.

SCRAPBOOK

Christmas mem'ries

Christmas is that time of year,
You think of mem'ries past.

It's going home again to be a child;
We want it all to last.

The angel on our front door,
Really put on a show,

Daddy made it shine so bright,
It looked like gold.

The carolers, us included,
Stood and sang out in the cold.

From door to door we went to sing
Both to young and old.

The Christmas lights were easy
To be seen from in the street,

And when caroling was over,
We'd come home to warm our feet.

The cinnamon smell at the front door
Is really something to describe,

A place of love that we all felt
Was very hard to hide.

Our Christmas tree was all decorated
in everything we made,

With our pictures glued on styrofoam
And paper Santas, a few to name.

To our painted wooden ornaments
And sweetgum balls, none were the same.

The pound cake by the Christmas tree
For Santa and his pack.

The spiced tea in the kitchen,
Just brings those mem'ries back.

The stockings full of fruit each year,
The divinity, the fudge.

We can't forget the cupcake snowman
Mamma made
With a little marshmallow pudge.

We have little ones to ourselves now,
And right now we don't have a clue,

But time goes on and repeats itself,
Or so some people say,

And if they do, I hope some mem'ries
Such as these for ours come true.

Shreree Merchant Crosby

Christmas nostalgia

No more we search for Christmas trees
In woods at the old homestead
No more we gather holly leaves
With berries bright and red.

We miss the sound of the rushing creek
The crunch of fallen leaves
And the scents of pine and cedar
The cool damp winter breeze.

We miss the joy of exploring the woods
As we hunted that "perfect" tree

But you know, God had provided
And shared those woods with me.

It was here that I first met him
And felt his protective care
And this beauty he had created
Became mine to have and share.

Although those years have long been gone
And I am no more a child
I have God's love within my heart
And his presence is alive!

—Ibera Garner, Jackson

Joint heirs — because of Christmas

Sometime ago a friend
Found a baby cardinal
Under an azalea bush —
Lost, hungry and yelling.

She brought the wayward one to me.
"You help baby birds, I know,
And this one's in great need
Of tender loving care."

After she was fed
A big serving of ground meat
And delicious boiled egg,
She whispered a happy contented note.

Then she was placed on a perch
In a pretty blue cage
Where others had found
A place called home.

The cage and baby bird
Were taken to
The big crepe myrtle tree
You've heard so much about.

Then, right in front of my eyes,
The performance of
A beautiful drama in real life
Began to unfold.

A pair of cardinals
(Had recently lost their babies)
Came flying to the cage
As fast as their wings could flap-flap.

They tried and tried to get in
From sides and top
Started fighting the cage,
Made a very big fuss.

In fear and awe the shepherds came
Led by the brilliant star.
The wise men, too, were guided hence
As they came from afar.

The Lord of lords, the King of kings
Lay in a manger there.

Then I took the baby out
And placed her on a limb —
Both parents hovered over her,
With much bird-chatter.

They began to feed her
And the happy sounds of the three
Said, "Home Sweet Home"
More eloquently than words.

The cardinals adopted the baby,
Made her their own.
And she inherited the riches of
Their bird-kingdom.

That reminds me . . .
When we come to Jesus.
God adopts us into his family
And we become joint heirs with his Son.

And we inherit the riches of
His Kingdom
And some day we'll dwell with him
in his Home Sweet Home forever!

Make this a real-life Christmas —
Come to Jesus
And be adopted
And inherit eternal life.

—Ruby Singley
Columbia

The holy birth

But only God, the Father, knew
The world was in his care.

Praise now and worship Christ the King
As Christmas fills the earth.
Behold as they, a tiny Babe
A blessed, holy birth.

© 1988 Augustine Burch
Brookhaven

Just for the Record



Acteens of Enterprise Church, Enterprise, were honored with a recognition service on Oct. 2. The theme for the service was Challenges by Candlelight. Pictured, left to right, are Beth Rolison, Amy Moore, Robin Lindsey, and Leslie Melton, Stacy Covington, Amy Boggan, Tracy Melton, Lori Turnage. Also pictured are flower girls



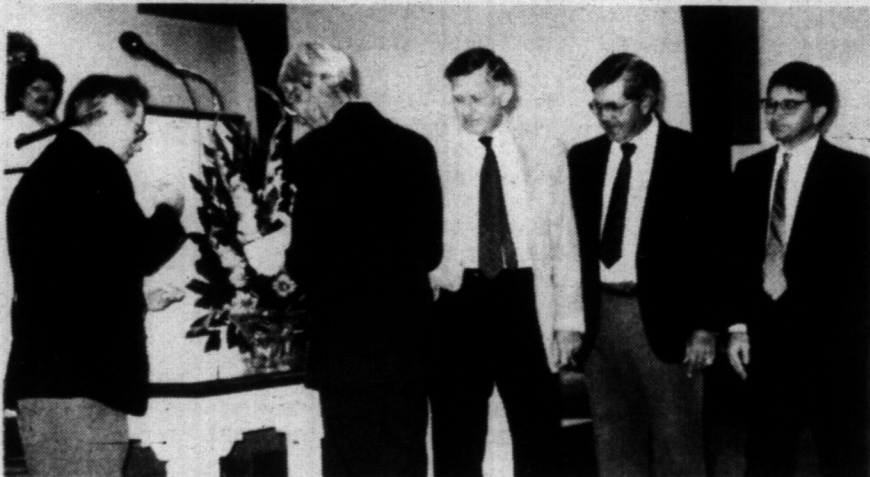
and ringbearers: Matthew McPhearson, Amy Martin, Allan Creel, Charlie Speed, Justin Rathburn, Anna Aycock, Justin Lee, Amber Felton, Leslie Ethridge, Candice Ethridge, Blake Chancellor, Courtney Temple, Don Moore, Amy Little, Dildion Goodin, and Jennifer Kersh. Not pictured are Acteen leaders, Karen Kersh and Linda Kidd.



GAs of Lake Harbor Church, Brandon, recently held their 1988 Coronation. Each girl chose a country to report about. They wore the traditional costume and prepared foods that are common to the country chosen. Pictured are Melanie Clark, Jennifer Mills, Susan Irby, Valerie Hudgens, and Sandra Irby. Mrs. Joy Rachel is the director.



Cedar Grove Church, Marion Association, recently held a recognition service for its GAs and Acteens. The theme was "The Commitment Continues." GAs, pictured, left to right, are Melody Lawrence, Linda Norton, Julie Stephens, Olivia Davis, Wendi Bourne, Ashley Stephens, and Joni Beard; back row, Carol Arthur, leader. Acteens, pictured, (at right) are Amy Jones, Queen; Jeni Beard, crown bearer; Rebecca Arthur, Queen; Kayla Breland, crown bearer; Sandi Stephens, leader.



East Corinth Church (Alcorn) observed Harvest Day Nov. 20. High attendance in Sunday school was 101. The building fund offering, which paid in full the church note, was \$4,003.00. Pictured burning the note are (left to right) Ralph Culp, pastor; W. W. Reid, chairman of deacons; Gerry McDaniel, chairman of building committee; Lealon Harris, builder; and Ricky James, treasurer.

Churches adopt expanded annuity plan

The following churches have adopted the Expanded Annuity Plan since those reported in the Oct. 13 issue of the Baptist Record: Clarke: Enterprise; Covington: FBC Sanford; Itawamba: Salem; Lebanon: Lynn Ray Road; Lincoln: Halbert Heights; Neshoba: FBC Philadelphia; North Delta: FBC Marks; Pike: Central and North McComb; Scott: Branch; Simpson: Harrisville; Union County: Keownville and Wallerville. One evangelistic association: Carroll Roberson Ministries.

Mississippi Baptist activities

Dec. 25 Christmas Day
Dec. 29-30 Youth Evangelism Conference; Mississippi College; 1:30 p.m., 29th-4:30 p.m., 30th (EVAN)

Staff changes

Bethlehem Church, Yazoo County, has called John Schoolar of Jackson as pastor, effective Dec. 1. He spent 13

years with the Foreign Mission Board as a missionary.

Rawls Springs will present clown seminar

Rawls Springs Church will present a Christian Clowning Seminar on Fri., Jan. 13, from 6:30 to 10 p.m. and Sat., Jan. 14, from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Deadline for registration is Jan. 6, 1989.

Happy and J. J., known as Ernie and Jean Liebib, will lead the seminar. Together they present Bible truths readily understandable to children and adults.

The cost will be \$30 if books and makeup are included, or \$20 if only books are included.

For more information, contact Rawls Springs Baptist Church, Hattiesburg (phone 268-2801).

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Missionary news



Dennis and Sherrie Meilstrup were honored with a surprise party upon completion of their first year of missionary service in Argentina. The youth of the Second Baptist Church of Mar del Plata, Argentina had prepared food, decorations, a program and purchased gifts for the Meilstrup family. The Meilstrups serve as music missionaries in Argentina and she is from Flora. Their address is San Luis 4082, 7600 Mar del Plata, Province Buenos Aires, Argentina, S.A.



Clear Creek Church gathered on the steps of the new addition to its 130 year old sanctuary following the dedication service Nov. 20.

Clear Creek Church dedicates addition to sanctuary

Clear Creek Church, Oxford, dedicated its new addition to the front of the 132 year old sanctuary, Nov. 20. The church began construction of a vestibule and front porch with columns this summer and completed the project in November.

It was the goal of the church to keep the addition in historical perspective

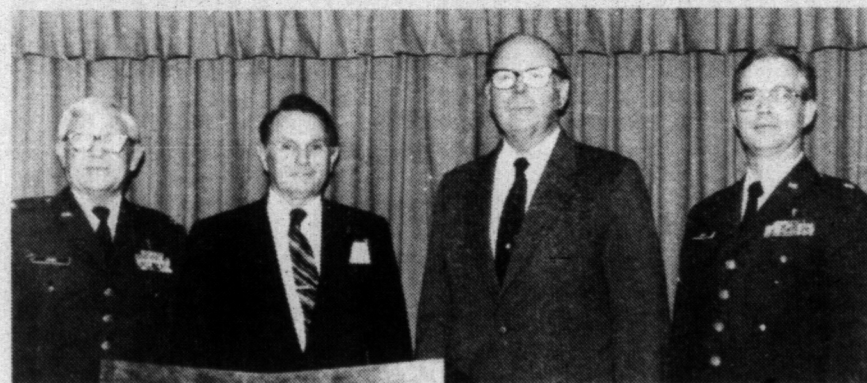
with the original sanctuary building built in 1856. The doors and windows were custom made to match those built into the sanctuary originally. Matching the hand-made brick proved to be the most challenging part of the addition, but it was achieved with a hand-made brick from North Carolina.

The \$50,000 plus addition was

dedicated in the Sunday morning service and that evening the church held its annual Thanksgiving Harvest Dinner. An offering goal of \$10,000 was set and over \$11,000 was collected toward a \$35,000 note on the new construction.

The pastor is Charles Lipe and the chairman of the vestibule committee was Don Waller.

Names in the news



Pictured are the officers of the Mississippi Baptist Chaplain's Association. From left they are: Bill Jones, retired Air Force chaplain, president; Gordon Shamburger, chaplain, Mississippi Baptist Medical Center, vice president; Ed Holmes, chaplain, V.A. Hospital, secretary-treasurer; and John Dent Jr., chaplain, Mississippi Air Guard, editor. Members of this group deal with pastoral care for persons in hospitals and health care facilities, industries, correctional facilities, military, rehabilitation, public safety, and other institutions.



These are the officers of the Mississippi alumni of the Southern Baptist Center for Biblical Studies. From left they are Marc Howard, pastor, Calvary, Belmont, secretary-treasurer; Edsel Bone, pastor, First, Southaven, president; Bill Burke, minister, senior adults and outreach, Raymond Road, Jackson, public relations chairman; and Sharber Smith, pastor, Shady Grove, Heidelberg, vice president.



Griffin

Gaylon Griffin was licensed to preach at New Zion Church, Leake County, on Oct. 23. Mike Harper is pastor. Griffin is available for supply call 253-2654.



Bethany Church, Marshall County, recently licensed two firemen to the gospel ministry. Pictured, left to right, are Larry West, Carl Teel, pastor, and Donald Worsham.

"God has given us two hands — one to receive with and the other to give with. We are not cisterns made of hoarding; we are channels made by sharing." — Billy Graham

ACTS

NOVEMBER 1988

CT	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
5:30	The Joy of Music/ Diane Bush/ Christopher Closeup	Sergeant Preston of the Yukon/ The Cisco Kid	Adventures of the Lone Ranger/ 28 Men	Great Churches of America (I)	Correspondence/ Vegetable Soup	Great Churches of America (II)	The Bible and Life/ The Good News +
6:30	This is the Life/ Westbrook Hospital	Life Today	Life Today	Life Today	Life Today	Life Today	Devey and Goliath/ Color Me + Rainbow
7:30	First Love/ Wendell Estep/ Changed Lives	30 Wall Street +/ Sunshine Factory	Christian Lifestyle +/ Skippy, the Bush Kangaroo/ Lessee	Word of Life/ Sunshine Factory	Campus Review/ Sunshine Factory	Weight +/ Sunshine Factory	Sunshine Factory/ Sergeant Preston of the Yukon
8:30	ACTS Methodist Hour	Skippy, the Bush Kangaroo/ Lessee	Skippy, the Bush Kangaroo/ Lessee	Skippy, the Bush Kangaroo/ Lessee	Skippy, the Bush Kangaroo/ Lessee	Skippy, the Bush Kangaroo/ Lessee	Lone Ranger/ Adventures of the Lone Ranger
9:30	Come Alive/ Nelson Price	One in the Spirit/ Sergeant Preston of the Yukon	Catch the Spirit/ Adventures of the Lone Ranger	Jewish World +/ Come Alive/ Nelson Price	30 Good Minutes/ Correspondence	Christian Lifestyle/ Magazine/ Great Churches of America (II)	Cisco Kid +/ Popcorn Theatre +
10:30	Catch the Spirit/ James Flemming/ FBC Richmond	The Cisco Kid/ Missions 88	28 Men/ What's Happening	What's Happening	Vegetable Soup/ What's Happening	What's Happening	+
11:30	Great Churches of America (I)	Life Today	Life Today	Life Today	Life Today	Hollywood Review	Jimmy Houston/ Outdoor Magazine
12:30	The Baptist Hour	30 Wall Street +/ Encore Theatre	U.C. Video News +/ Encore Theatre	Word of Life/ Encore Theatre	Campus Review/ Encore Theatre	+	Plant Groom/ The Super +/ Handyman
1:30	Sunday Selection	+	+	+	+	+	The Bible and Life/ The Good News +
2:30	Missions 88	COPE	COPE	COPE	COPE	COPE	Devey and Goliath/ Color Me A Rainbow
3:30	Love Worth Finding/ Arden Rogers	Psychiatry and You/ Sunshine Factory	Psychiatry and You/ Sunshine Factory	Psychiatry and You/ Sunshine Factory	Psychiatry and You/ Sunshine Factory	Psychiatry and You/ Sunshine Factory	Sunshine Factory/ Sergeant Preston of the Yukon
4:30	The Joy of Music/ Diane Bush/ Op In The Spirit	Skippy, the Bush Kangaroo/ Lessee	Skippy, the Bush Kangaroo/ Lessee	Skippy, the Bush Kangaroo/ Lessee	Skippy, the Bush Kangaroo/ Lessee	Skippy, the Bush Kangaroo/ Lessee	Lone Ranger/ Adventures of the Lone Ranger
5:30	First United Methodist Church/ Houston This is the Life	Adventures of the Lone Ranger/ 28 Men	Great Churches of America (I)	Correspondence/ Vegetable Soup	Great Churches of America (II)	Sergeant Preston of the Yukon/ The Cisco Kid	Popcorn Theatre
6:30	Weight/ ACTS Methodist Hour	What's Happening/ Life Today	What's Happening/ Life Today	What's Happening/ Life Today	What's Happening/ Life Today	What's Happening/ Life Today	Country Greenroads
7:30	Life Together +/ Ned T. Jones	Search +	Word of Life	Campus Review	Created to Be One +	James Flemming +/ FBC Richmond	Sing Out America
8:30	The Baptist Hour/ Evening Worship	The Joy of Music/ Diane Bush/ Truth Alive/ Ron Harrell	Catch the Spirit/ 30 Good Minutes	First Love/ Wendell Estep/ First United Methodist Church, Houston	Invitation to Life	30 Wall Street +/ Prayers + (See Note Below)	The Bible and Life/ The Good News +
9:30	Richard Jackson	COPE	COPE	COPE	COPE	COPE	Prayer Song +/ Gospel Music/ Taffey
10:30	The Joy of Music/ Diane Bush/ Christopher Closeup	Encore Theatre	Encore Theatre	The Baptist Hour	Encore Theatre	Encore Theatre	Sunny Jones/ Gospel/ Lightmusic
11:30	This is the Life/ Sunday Selection	Adventures of the Lone Ranger/ 28 Men	Great Churches of America (I)	This is the Life/ Correspondence	Great Churches of America (II)	Lightmusic	Cisco Kid +/ Popcorn Theatre +
12:30	+	28 Men/ What's Happening	What's Happening	What's Happening	What's Happening	What's Happening	+
1:30	Missions 88/ Weight	Life Today	Life Today	Life Today	Life Today	Life Today	Hollywood Review
2:30	ACTS Methodist Hour	Search +/ COPE	Word of Life/ COPE	Campus Review/ COPE	Created to Be One +/ COPE	James Flemming +/ FBC Richmond	+
3:30	Life Together +/ Ned T. Jones	Encore Theatre	Encore Theatre	Encore Theatre	Encore Theatre	Encore Theatre	Sing Out America
4:30	+	+	+	+	+	+	+

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December 25, 1988

Celebrating the Savior's birth: fulfillment of promise

By Robert Earl Shirley
Luke 2:25-38

As we come to this season of the year when we celebrate the birth of our Savior, we recall two of those who were to rejoice in his coming and to recognize him as the long awaited Messiah. When the days of Mary's purification were past and the ritual requirement incumbent on the birth of a child were accomplished, Joseph and Mary proceeded to the temple to offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving.



Shirley

A man, described as righteous and devout, had been hoping and looking for the coming of the Messiah. Indeed, it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die until he had seen the Lord's Christ. Thus it was that he was led by the Spirit to be in the temple on that day when Jesus was brought by his parents to be dedicated, as was customary

UNIFORM

by Jewish law. When Simeon saw the baby, he took him in his arms and offered praise and gratitude to God.

We know very little about this man, but we thrill at his example of faith. Years had passed by without the nation's dream of a deliverer coming to pass. Simeon's own personal disappointments must have been many, but his expectations had seemingly not diminished. Having seen the child Jesus, he now declared his willingness to die and expressed the peace he had found with the words, "For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou has prepared before the face of all people."

This man was able to see that Jesus had come not simply for the Jews, but for the Gentiles as well. Christ had come for all people, but the nature of each person's response to him will determine his destiny and the true condition of his heart.

Also in the temple was an aged, godly lady,

by the name of Anna, who is described as a prophetess. Luke's reliability as a historian is seen in his attention to details, revealed by his telling of her family relationships and the years of her marriage and widowhood. One wonders when the hope for the Messiah had first risen in her heart and if she had hoped for all these years that Luke records concerning her. In her hours of loneliness, she found peace by her constant worshiping in the temple and by the frequency of her prayers. She, like Simeon, gave thanks to God when seeing the baby and talked concerning Jesus as bringing redemption.

There are countless millions of people in the world today whose lives are empty, who are looking for something to give meaning to their existence. They have no choice but to keep on living, but they find no joy in doing so. There are those, even among this number, who have joined a church but still see Jesus only as an example. The knowledge of Simeon and Anna was surely limited, but their experience here shouts out to such people everywhere, "Look! Here is the promised comforter that we have

awaited so many years, the Christ, the Lord, the Redeemer, our Savior."

As we celebrate Christmas in commemoration of the coming of Christ to earth, we need to consider again the response that we have made to the presence of Jesus in our lives. Simeon and Anna illustrate that men and women alike can be equally devoted and of service to God. Commercialization of the day has resulted in many people celebrating the day without even considering the connection that Christmas has to Christ.

Certainly we will all want to go to the house of God on Sunday and worship him by singing praises to his name and hearing his Word proclaimed. The Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for Foreign Missions is a most appropriate way to recall and rejoice in the birth of our Savior. He came that all people of all nations and races might be saved. Through this annual offering, we have the opportunity to send this Good News to the whole world. The world needs Christ! We must not fail.

Shirley is pastor emeritus, Parkway, Tupelo.

Jesus — the word made flesh — the message of Christmas

By Frank H. Thomas, Jr.
John 1:1-18

The first 18 verses in the gospel of John are sometimes called a prologue. The prologue serves as an introduction to the gospel. These verses are somewhat different from the rest of the text in that they consciously have borrowed from the world of Greek philosophy in order to relate the Christian gospel to the Hellenistic world. Some have suggested that the gospel according to John was written to Greeks; others, because of the heavy Jewish emphasis elsewhere in the gospel, have suggested that the readership may have been Hellenistic Jews. Nevertheless, concepts used in the first 18 verses would have appealed to a person educated in Greek philosophy whether Gentile or Jew.



Thomas

Such a concept is given to the term word which is the translation logos. In Greek thought the logos was the life-giving or animating force of the universe. John related logos to God himself and indeed to God's incarnation in Jesus Christ. When we use the term word or logos, we are referring to a Greek term which has been co-opted for spiritual understanding in the Hellenistic world.

We also see the influence of the Jewish scriptures in these verses. For example, verse 1 sounds very much like Genesis 1:1. The difference comes in the addition of Greek concept of logos to the truth in the Jewish scriptures

BIBLE BOOK

that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The logos was with God and was God himself. Through the logos all things came to be, and without him nothing was made that was made.

The logos or word was the agent of all creation. In Genesis the reference of the creating deity is a plural reference: "Let us create man in our image." So the plurality of the deity is properly referred to John 1 by reference to the word as the agent of creation with God.

The logos or life-giving force who created the world came into the world in a special way and became the light of the world and the light of men. Just as the logos had created the world and the natural lights which apply there to, so the logos was responsible for the light of men which was a spiritual illumination for those who lived in darkness. This catches the significance of the prophecy in Isaiah that "the people dwell in darkness have seen a great light."

A contrast between darkness and light appears in verse 5. They are viewed as opposing forces, and the light is pictured as the stronger of the two forces. The darkness tried to comprehend the light but was unable to do so because of the stronger, penetrating force of the light which pushed the darkness back. This spiritual light is that superior spiritual force in the universe which is able to penetrate the darkness of sin and despair. The light of spiritual truth is able to fill a dark and meaningless world with its own light.

John switched from Hellenistic thought into

more historical thought in verses 6-8 describing John the Baptizer who came to bear witness to the light and to prepare the way for the light. Some misunderstood him and thought that he himself was the light. John refused that designation but reminded the people that he came to tell others about the light and to help them to prepare to receive the spiritual light which would come from the logos or word of God.

The message of Christmas is contained in the next verses. The message of Christmas is that the light has come into the world. This is the light — the spiritual light — which enlightens every man. Though the light was in the world and the world was made through him, the world did not know him. The light came to his own people, but they did not receive him. This is a sadness, but it is the telescoped message of the gospel that God's Son came into the world and was rejected ultimately by those who crucified him on the cross.

Nevertheless, as verses 12 and 13 would remind us, there were many who received him. The light gave those power to become children of God. These were born not of blood or of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man but of God. Here is a reference to the birth from above which becomes prominent again in the gospel in chapter 3. Of course, it is this spiritual birth or birth from above which was the mission of the light who came into the world to bring illumination to every human being.

The reality of the incarnation comes as a climax to the prologue in verses 14-18. John simply says that the word or logos or life-giving force of the universe become flesh and dwell-

ed on earth among people. Those who were alive at the time, including John himself, beheld him and his glory. The telescoping into one human life of the life-giving force of the universe was a concept and a philosophical transaction unthinkable to Greek philosophers. But that was the difference between Greek philosophers and the preachers of God. As they tried to relate the good news to all of those in the world of the day, they used the terms familiar to the people and filled them with new meaning. So the logos was no longer an impersonal life-giving force, but he was a human being — God made flesh.

John the Baptizer gave witness to this human being as the one whose way he had prepared. From the fullness of this person all received grace upon grace. Moses gave the law, but the word made flesh, or Jesus Christ, gave grace the truth. No one has ever seen God, but the only Son who is the logos, the light of the world, God become flesh, has revealed God to us and made him known. That is the message of Christmas.

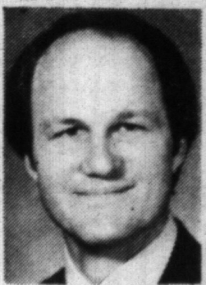
The good news to us is that we do not have to live in darkness or in ignorance about the spiritual powers that be. We can know this power in a directly personal way. Furthermore, this power is not malevolent but full of grace and truth. He came to bring salvation and spiritual birth to all of those who would receive him. That is the evangelistic message which we proclaim at Christmas this year. Christ has come and is for us the light of the world, the source of grace and truth and salvation for us.

Thomas is pastor, Alta Woods, Jackson.

Eyes to see the gift of God as essence

By Steve Odom
Matthew 1:18-25; Galatians 4:4-5;
Colossians 2:9-10

Packaging is important. At least that is what the marketing industry tells us these days. The next time you find yourself walking through any kind of store, just walk slowly and take a look at the various kind of packages that contain certain items. And what about that "package deal" at the computer store or the car dealer or the department store? "Look at all you get, and look how little you pay," they say with great enthusiasm. The manner in which something is presented tends to have a great deal to do with whether or not we are open to accepting it.



Odom

But, the old saying that there is an exception to every rule may apply here. Have you ever been given a gift that are poorly wrapped in unattractive paper with no bow or ribbon and opened it to discover a most valuable and precious gift? If you have, then you probably

LIFE AND WORK

are learning, like I am, not to judge a book by its cover. Packaging is not always a surefire way to judge the value of what is inside the package. Our tendency, though, is to make quick judgments about the value of things based on how they are packaged.

Almost 2,000 years ago a gift was given to all of humanity. The gift came in a relatively small package with no fancy wrappings. As a matter of fact, the gift was wrapped in common cloth. The gift had no name tag on it for the recipients to know from whom it came. A small group of people were there at the occasion of the gift's presentation. They seemed to recognize the value of the gift, but after a brief celebration, the party broke up and everyone went his or her own way.

Some 60 years after the gift was given, a document was written which recognized the gift for its real value and made clear from whom the gift came. Matthew 1:18-25 states that the gift was from God and its value was in its sav-

ing power. The gift had a name, or names. The gift was called Jesus Emmanuel. The two names together mean "God saves" because "God is with us." The gift was the presence and power of God, but the gift came in unpretentious packaging, and few people recognized the value of the gift.

The gift was given at the perfect time. You know, timing can be an important part of gift giving. If someone is not ready for a gift, it may not be recognized or appreciated. And then again, even if the time seems to be right, people may not recognize the gift because the packaging did not catch their attention.

A man named Paul the Apostle wrote a letter to a group of people who were trying to decide if this gift that had been given was the one they had been expecting. Paul said that when the time was right, or more accurately, when the time was ripe, God sent this gift to the world (Galatians 4:4-5). There were no delays, no interruptions. The gift was, in fact, the one they had been expecting. The gift arrived on time. The timeliness of the gift means that you and I, today, almost 2,000 years later, can also receive the gift, a gift that came just in time.

The gift was everything the recipients need-

ed. The gift was the essence of the giver (Colossians 2:9-10). After all, isn't that the greatest gift anyone can give, the gift that represents the best of the giver? Isn't that the point of O. Henry's classic Christmas story, *The Gift of the Magi*? A poor, struggling young couple find that they have each sacrificed what meant the most to them to obtain a gift for the other. Della had sold the pride of her appearance, her long, beautiful hair, to buy Jim a platinum watch chain for his pocket watch, a family heirloom. Jim had sold his pocket watch to buy Della a set of tortoise shell combs for her hair, combs she had dreamed of possessing, but knew she never would because of their cost. What Della and Jim ended up giving each other was the best of themselves, the wisest and most cherished gifts that can be given.

May God give us eyes to see Jesus Christ as the essence of God's love and the best of God himself, eyes to recognize his unpretentious presence among us. May God give us hearts to feel human need and respond by giving the best of ourselves. May the Spirit of Christ be the spirit of Christmas for all of us.

Odom is pastor, University Church, Hattiesburg.

January 1, 1989

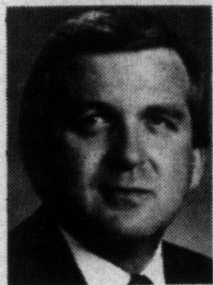
Sent to preach the Good News

By Gary G. Berry

Background Scripture: Luke 4:14-44

Focal passage: Luke 4:16-21, 40-43

Hopeless people do not have to live in hopelessness forever. This lesson is about our Lord caring enough to reach out to people who need to hear good news. The text also makes it clear that he is powerful enough to perform what he promised.



Berry

Jesus returned to his hometown of Nazareth. Perhaps it would have been easy for Jesus to use the Sabbath as a time to rest and visit with relatives and friends in his hometown. That was not to be, however, for it was His "custom" (verse 16) to worship in the synagogue on the Sabbath. Jesus placed the highest of priorities on worship. One must look elsewhere to find any support for neglecting public worship. Jesus

never neglected worship.

While in the synagogue for worship, the minister handed Jesus the scroll of Isaiah. He read from Isaiah 61:1-2. That passage, quoted in Luke 4:18, is the key verse of this lesson. Isaiah was speaking of the year of Jubilee, a time when captives were to be released. In this year, the 15th year, the trumpet was to be sounded and freedom was to be announced throughout the land. (See Leviticus 25:8f).

This was to Jesus a messianic passage. In fact, he declared that he was the fulfillment of this scripture. He said in effect, "Isaiah was speaking of the day Messiah would come. I am the Messiah!" The essential fact is that Jesus, the Messiah, was given to the mission of announcing the Good News to people who knew little else but bad news.

As disciples of Jesus Christ, we, too, are sent to proclaim the Good News. We are called and

commissioned to share the Bread of Life with those in spiritual poverty. Ours is the privilege of announcing deliverance to men and women in our town who are the captives of sin and its consequences. That was the mission of our Lord. How can that which was so much in his heart be so little in ours?

Jesus did not merely speak with authority. He backed up his words by his actions. Involving himself in the lives of ordinary, hurting, and helpless people, he asserted his authority over demons and disease (verses 40-41). Men today may quibble about the matter, but Jesus accepted demon possession as reality. He commanded a demon, "Muzzle yourself" (verse 35). At a later hour, he demanded that demons stop speaking because they recognized him as Christ (verse 41). As Herschel Hobbs notes, it is interesting to know that before men recognized him as the Son of God, demons did. Later in his ministry Jesus would be accused of working in partnership with demons. That may explain why on this occasion Jesus insisted upon

silencing the testimony of demons to his deity.

Apparently, Jesus was very popular for the moment. The crowds kept trying to persuade him to stay in his hometown (verse 42). Jesus was more concerned, however, about sharing the gospel than about counting compliments (verses 43-44). This message of Good News is for all people in all places. Even today, Christians who sincerely love Jesus face the subtle danger of wanting to worship him without sharing him with others. The gospel message is to be declared, not merely examined.

A speaker, whose name I do not recall, asked a penetrating question at a meeting. He asked, "If all the lost people your church prayed for this week (and witnessed to) were to be saved this Sunday, how many would be saved?" That may force some of our thinking and doing back into perspective. Jesus said, "I have come to seek and to save that which was lost." We are foolish followers if we believe there is any alternative mission for us.

Berry is pastor, First Church, McComb.

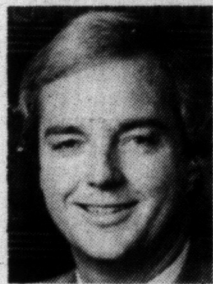
UNIFORM

The Acts: days of beginning in Jerusalem

By Bert Breland

Acts 1:1-26

Welcome to a study in the book of Acts. There is certainly no book any more exciting or filled with energy than Acts. It is commonly accepted that Luke is the author of the book of Acts and that Acts is part of a two-volume work known as Luke-Acts. The book of Acts opens with a reference to the previous volume and a brief summary of Luke's gospel.



Breland

In the first verse of Acts, as in the third verse of the gospel, Luke makes mention of "Theophilus" who appears to be the person to whom each of these great works are addressed. However, there is the possibility that there wasn't any person named Theophilus. Some seem to think that Luke might have combined the word "Theos" meaning God, and the word "philos" meaning love and was addressing these books to the "beloved of God." In any event, we know that Luke intended that these works would have a greater audience than just one person.

As we begin this study in the book of Acts we need to determine what Luke's purpose was in

writing this account. If we take the extended title "The Acts of the Apostles," at face value we could come to the conclusion that the purpose of this book is to tell us all the things that the apostles accomplished. While this book is filled with stories about some of the apostles, it certainly doesn't give us an account of all of them. In fact, beyond just the mention of their names, nine of the twelve are never discussed. There are also some stories about people who weren't apostles at all, such as Stephen, Philip the deacon, and Barnabas. Furthermore, of the apostles who are mentioned, no attempt is made to tell their complete story.

If the purpose of Acts is not simply to give us the acts of the apostles, what then is the purpose of Acts? Frank Stagg, in his commentary on Acts, says that Luke's purpose was "to show a victory of Christianity — to show the expansion of a concept, the liberation of the gospel as it breaks through barriers that are religious, racial, and national." Christianity had begun with the Jews but would move far beyond such a limited focus and would become for all people everywhere. Acts will show us how that happened.

The introduction to the book is contained in verses 1-8 and gives us an account of Jesus' last appearance to the disciples before his ascension. There are two major thoughts that Jesus has for them before he goes. First, wait in Jerusalem for the promise of the Father, which is "a baptism with the Holy Spirit." This will not be their first encounter with the Spirit because they are already Christians. It will be a further empowering of the Spirit in their lives. It will be an awakening; they will become aware of the potential they have through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Second, Jesus gives them a commission. The disciples had just asked Jesus if this is the time that he is going to restore Israel, and Jesus redirects their thinking to that which they have been called to accomplish. They aren't to worry with the kingdom of Israel, but rather with the communication of the gospel. Jesus gives them orders as to how and where they are to be witnesses which is far more than a geographical outline for them to follow. He speaks of Jerusalem, which is our hometown; of Judea, which is our country and like-minded kinsmen; of Samaria, which is our unlovely neighbor; and of the uttermost parts of the earth, which includes everyone that we might have tried to exclude from the first three directives. The purpose of Acts is beginning to

unfold.

After the commission, Jesus was lifted up into a cloud and received out of their sight. It is interesting to note that the ascension took place on the Mount of Olives because this was a place that was significant in the life of Jesus. It was the home of his dear friends, Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. It is also the place where he agonized in prayer on the night of his arrest. Since the time of the prophet Zechariah (14:3-4) the Mount of Olives has been associated with messianic expectations. His being received up into a cloud is important in that a cloud was often used to symbolize the presence of God.

The balance of this first chapter is devoted to the waiting in the upper room. Luke gives us a partial list of those present, which includes the eleven apostles, the mother of Jesus, some unidentified women (most likely from Galilee), the Lord's brothers, and others totaling about 120. It was during this time of waiting that they chose to deal with the loss of Judas and his replacement. Matthias was nominated and elected to be one of the 12. Probably the most significant thing about these final verses in Chapter 1 is found in verse 14. The prelude to Pentecost was that they were of one mind and continually in prayer.

Breland is pastor, North Greenwood Church, Greenwood.

BIBLE BOOK

Harmony needed: united we stand, divided we fall

By J. Greg Martin

I Corinthians 1:1-17

George Morris once wrote, "United we stand, divided we fall." He had reference to our country during the turbulent mid-1800's when he penned those words. This principle is true for effective government, warfare, sports, and family relationships. When there is harmony, much can be accomplished. Without it, failure is inevitable.



Martin

This principle is also true of the voluntary organization we know as the church. If a congregation of God's people is united around Christ, great and glorious things can happen for the Savior's name. When God's people are divided, the work of God goes undone and little of what we do pleases him. Jesus affirmed this principle in Mark 3:24-25, "And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand."

As the epistle of I Corinthians begins, Paul pleads for harmony in the church. The church

LIFE AND WORK

had many problems, but chief above them all was a lack of unity. I am convinced that their fractured fellowship helped facilitate some of their other problems such as immorality, divorce, disrespect for the Lord's Table, abuse of spiritual gifts, and misunderstandings about the resurrection. Before Paul tried to correct those problems, he mentioned the need for harmony in the church.

Our unity is rooted in the fact that we each belong to God. Our unity is not based on the organization we belong to, but to the Savior we love. When we are close to the Lord, we can't help but be close to one another.

One Sunday evening I was sitting in church, and was startled when my pastor asked two men on opposite sides of the auditorium to stand up and work their way toward the pulpit. He gave them only one stipulation. The two men were not to move in each other's direction. As you can imagine, it was impossible for them to get to the pulpit without getting close to each other. The pastor went on to explain that the Christian life is like that dilemma. It is impossible to be in harmony with God without being

in harmony with others who are near to God. Our Lord Jesus needs to be our point of unity.

I Corinthians 1:1-9 identifies three things God has done to make it possible for us to have unity. He has given each of us a personal relationship with Christ, vs 1-3. He has blessed us with spiritual gifts to edify the entire body of Christ, vs 4-7. God has assured us that he will be faithful to us unto the end, vs 8-9.

With all of God's graciousness toward us, there is no excuse for disharmony. Usually a lack of unity in the fellowship is born and nurtured in a selfish spirit. James 4:1 warns of strife's origin, "From where come wars and fightings among you? Come they not here, even of your lusts that war in your members?"

Disharmony has no place in the Christian church or denomination. Paul's desire was for there to be "no division" among the people. He wanted the church to be "perfectly joined together," vs 10. This phrase was used of fixing a broken bone. In Matthew 4:21, the Greek word was used in reference to mending the fishing nets. Paul used the Greek word again in Galatians 6:1 to refer to restoring an erring brother. God's desire for unity, restoration, mending, and wholeness is also seen in Psalms 133:1, Romans 12:5, and John 17:20-23.

I Corinthians 1:10-17 identifies that the surface reason for the church's division was over personalities. Some claimed to follow Paul, others Peter and still others Apollos. A final clique was aligned with the first "Jesus Only" movement. No doubt they all claimed unity, but Paul knew better. Many today claim unity but know nothing of it. In a former association that I served in, we had a group of dissenters split from one of the larger churches. The group of dissenters founded a church and called it the Harmony Baptist Church.

Harmony is more than a word. It is more than a desire of God. It is his will for his people. Our effectiveness greatly depends on our harmony with Christ and one another.

In my garage there is a rag that used to be a nice shirt. After it developed a couple of holes I decided the shirt was good only for washing the car. No longer was it useful for its intended purpose. Our churches can become as a rag, no longer useful, if we allow and participate in disharmony. When holes develop, we need to sew them up with God's love and forgiveness in order to accomplish harmony in the church and make the gospel effective in the world.

Martin is pastor, Commission Road Church, Long Beach.

"Send the Light" celebrates Christmas



"Send the Light" may not sound like a Christmas song to most people, but missionaries Bob and Maxine Stewart found themselves singing it in Thailand as they celebrated Christmas with a group of rural Christians.

The Stewarts were appointed to Thailand more than 30 years ago. They were to become the first missionaries ever to live in Chacheungsao Province, eastern Thailand.

Shortly after arriving, the Stewarts visited the small Baptist church in Chacheungsao, an independent Christian group who had asked to become a part of the Baptist Mission. This was the only Christian group of any denomination in the entire province and several surrounding provinces. Some of the older members were from China.

At the end of their first three-months term of language study, Bob went with an evangelistic team in street or market preaching and tract distribution in every town and village in the province, which has 350,000 people.

As the team was returning to Bangkok, the seminary students were singing "Send the Light." Bob thought about the thousands they had seen that week who had received the gospel light for the FIRST time in their lives. Team members had asked people at every stop if they had ever heard about Jesus before. Invariably the answer came back that they had NEVER heard about Jesus before that day. "I had the astounding and shocking feeling," said Bob, "that we were back in time with Paul and the

other first century missionaries."

Since that time the light of the gospel has been sent throughout the eastern provinces of Thailand through the efforts of many Southern Baptist missionaries, Thai home missionaries, Thai pastors and laymembers, and the Bangkla Baptist Hospital.

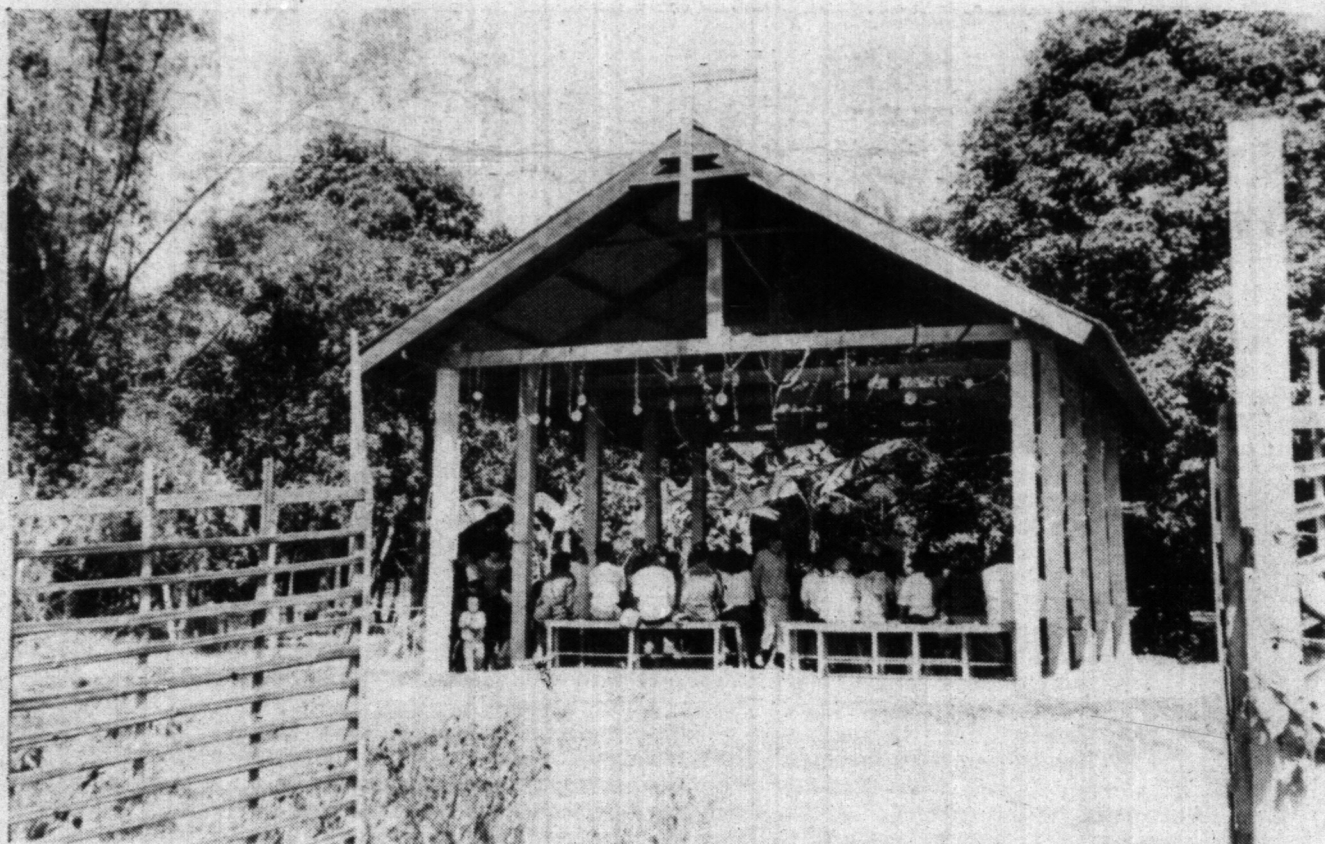
One of the strongest areas of Baptist work in east-Thailand is Nadee District in the neighboring Prachinburi Province. The work began there about 25 years ago with three leprosy patients. The Chaom Baptist Church was constituted in 1972. One of the original three believers, Krajang Chanpak, became its pastor. There is now a daughter church, plus four yet-to-be constituted "house-churches." The name of the daughter church is the SONG SAWANG Baptist Church (SEND THE LIGHT Baptist Church), pastored by Sanga Champak, one of the three original converts. (The third convert, Thanom Chamdom, is pastor of a house-church in the nearby Sampantha village.)

The Stewarts last Christmas participated in the joint area-wide Christmas celebration at the SEND THE LIGHT Baptist Church. Bob preached the Christmas message, and Maxine played the RANAT EK, a hollowed-out tree trunk with bamboo keyboard Thai instrument (xylophone style). In addition to the five churches participating in the Christmas program, a number of unsaved friends and relatives also attended.

To the left of the pulpit was a rather tall "cockscorn" plant, well past its prime, which was decorated for the "Christmas tree." A Christmas "buffet" of rice, curries, hot chilies, and long uncooked beans was served from the numerous pots arranged on backless benches.

One of the lay-leaders announced that he was 'Santa Claus!' To the delight of the children, he began handing out small plastic bags of roasted peanuts. Disappointed in their Christmas surprise? Not at all! They hadn't expected anything for Christmas.

Returning home from the Christmas celebration, Bob and Maxine rejoiced that Christians in America had answered the call to SEND THE LIGHT half-way around the world to Thailand.



SONG SAWANG Baptist Church (SEND THE LIGHT Church) at Mong Nae in Prachinburi, Thailand. This was the Christmas celebration that Bob and Maxine Stewart attended. The building looks unfinished, but it is completed. Country people like open buildings for meetings. It catches all the breeze. Note the hand-made 'pews' — backless to save cost,

but they are also used to sitting on the floor at their homes so they are not used to backs on seats, as a general rule. Note also the Christmas decorations hanging from the rafters. They have the fence to help keep the water buffalos out, and to give some protection and privacy to the church building and property. — (Photos by Maxine Stewart)



Missionary Bob Stewart with pastor Sanga Champak of SEND THE LIGHT Baptist Church in Thailand stand beside the church's Christmas tree. Banana trees are in the background. The pastor has an arrested case of leprosy, which flares up from time to time.



Thai "Santa Claus" distributes roasted peanuts. He 'dressed up special' for his role (and wore a tie!) Until it was time to be Santa, he had his long straight-tail shirt outside his trousers.

Hymns Baptists sing . . .

"The First Nowell"

By William J. Reynolds

This joyful Christmas carol is of unknown origin. The words are from an 1823 collection, and the music appeared a decade later. In this form it has remained basically unchanged for more than 150 years.

In its original version the opening line of stanza two contains an error that seems to have bothered no one. "They looked up and saw a star" credits the shepherds with having sighted the heavenly body, yet scripture says only that the star was seen by the Wise Men (Matthew 2), not by the shepherds (Luke 2).

"Nowell" is the Old English form of the Old French "Noel." The Latin form is "Natalis," the Spanish, "Natal," and the Italian, "Natale."

This is an expression of great joy, originally shouted or sung enthusiastically to commemorate the birth of Christ.

Geoffrey Chaucer, the 14th-century English poet, mentions the term in his "Franklin's Tale," providing evidence of the early usage of the word. Writing in Middle English, the language then spoken in London, Chaucer wrote:

Biforn him stant braun of the tusked swyn,
And "Now!" cryeth every lusty man.
Sing your "Nowells" during this Christmas season with great joy and make the rafters sing!

William J. Reynolds is professor of church music at Southwestern Seminary.

Home of the apostle Peter discovered by archaeologists

JERUSALEM, Israel (EP). — Archaeologists recently unearthed what they believe was once the Apostle Peter's house in Capernaum. The Bible indicates that this was a place that Jesus stayed, taught, and conducted healings, including the healing of Peter's mother-in-law.

This and other archaeological discoveries prove that "Jesus did exist, and we know more about him than about almost any other Palestinian Jew before 70 A.D.," said James H. Charlesworth, a professor at Princeton Theological Seminary and author of *Jesus Within Judaism*.

Charlesworth said the discovery of Peter's home substantiates accounts given in the New Testament Gospels that some scholars had questioned. The house dates to about 60 B.C. and contains etched crosses, a boat, and more than 100 Greek, Aramaic, Syriac, Latin, and Hebrew symbols on the walls from second and third century Christians who venerated the site. Ritualistic pottery and fishhooks were also found there.

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